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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Wednesday, Sept. 28, 1932.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "A Grange Dinner." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

"Dear Aunt Sammy: Will you please help me out with some suggestions about planning and running a grange dinner?" begins a letter that came in on the mail yesterday. The letter continues: "About fifty people will be present. I don't know a thing about managing a big meal like this, but I'm chairman of the affair and I'd like to do a good job. So I'll appreciate any advice you can give me on menu-making and serving--in fact, on the whole thing from first to last. By the way, we may serve this meal outdoors if the weather permits. Otherwise, we'll eat in our grange hall. We have a very small stove in the hall, not large enough to prepare anything but coffee."

Seems to me that's quite an order for one aunt to answer. But, fortunately I can always call on the Menu Specialist and the Recipe Lady for help. They've both had lots of experience running community meals, church suppers and so on. So, Miranda, if you'll take your pencil, I'll pass on to you what these experts suggest about your grange dinner.

They say that one of the easiest and pleasantest ways to serve such a meal is cafeteria or buffet style. A take-your-choice-and-help-yourself dinner is jolly and informal. Everyone is his own waiter and this saves a lot of work for the food committee. In fact, all the committee has to do is to plan the meal, set up a long table and arrange the food down the length of the table so that it will be easy to reach. Next set out the salads, sandwiches and other cold foods. Finally, toward the foot of the table serve the hot dishes and the steaming hot coffee.

What about individual trays for each person to carry his dinner on? Very convenient, if you have a set of small light trays. You can set the pile of trays at the very head of the table so each guest will start out with one. A tray often saves accidents and makes the self-service meal easier for everybody.

Another thing. Everyone will be happier if the hall is equipped with plenty of table room. Of course, each person will choose his own seat. But plenty of room at large tables or at little round or square tables is more comfortable than eating from one's lap.

The long service table ought to be the most inviting sight in the room. All the food on display, especially the salad, should look tempting at the first glance. Everything should be dainty, from the spotless table cloth to the white napkin around the baking dishes. Then nature will give you help in decorating. You can use bright fall flowers in big bowls or you can make the table gay with autumn leaves and sprays of red fall berries.

So much for the table. Now for the menu. Since the grange hall isn't equipped for cooking a big meal, all the items on the menu will come from home-- or rather from different homes. And that's something you'll want to consider most carefully in making the menu. Every good meal needs one or two hot dishes. How can you serve hot dishes when you have to bring them from home? Food cooked in heavy earthenware baking dishes and casseroles holds its heat for several hours, if you wrap the dish well with tea towels and paper. So the Menu Specialist has included two oven-baked items on the menu, two hot dishes beside coffee.

But before I give you the menu, wouldn't you like to jot down five general points about large-quantity meals that our friends the specialists have suggested to me.

Point no. 1. Choose simple and not too expensive food. Most community meals must either make money or pay for themselves, so expensive food is out of the question.

Point no. 2. Choose dishes that you can prepare easily in large quantities. Avoid fussy, elaborate foods. They take too much time and effort.

Point no. 3. When you plan the menu and apportion the foods which each woman is to bring, try to arrange so that each member brings her own specialty. For example, if Mrs. Lee is renowned for her devil's food cake or her baked beans that's the item for her to contribute, not some other food which she may not make so successfully.

Point no. 4. The chairman needs a complete plan of the whole proceedings down on paper. This plan will list exactly what each person is bringing for the meal and exactly the duties of each committee member.

Point no. 5. The Recipe Lady says that you save a lot of fuss and confusion in the kitchen or serving room if everything is in perfect order before the meal begins and if the line of ~~march~~ is carefully routed.

And the Menu Specialist adds that getting everything possible done ahead is very helpful. For example, measure the coffee and put it in the big pots ready to add water. Salad is one of the hardest parts of the meal to bring from home. It must be dainty, cold and crisp. A wilted, bedraggled, wet, slightly mushy mixture appeals to no one. Probably the best plan is to bring the lettuce in one container, the salad mixture in another and the dressing in another. Then combine it at the last minute. This is especially true of cabbage salad, which wilts and may develop an unpleasant flavor if it is mixed with dressing long in advance and brought in a tight container.

There. I think that's all the suggestions. Now if you're ready, we'll write the menu, a cafeteria menu of foods brought from home.

The hot dishes first. Crockets of hot Boston baked beans and baking dishes of hot scalloped potatoes. Then the meats. Platters of cold sliced meat loaf and cold sliced home-baked ham. You'll want mustard and chile sauce to stand on the table near these dishes. Then deviled eggs, arranged on a platter and garnished with lettuce, celery leaves, or parsley. Now the salads. Take your choice of cabbage and pineapple salad with boiled dressing or mixed vegetable

salad. A very colorful vegetable salad, nice for a meal like this, is sliced tomatoes, sliced or diced crisp cucumbers and sliced green peppers on a bed of lettuce. For relishes, you might serve whole pickles, sweet, sour or dill, and mixed pickles and relishes, whatever kind are specialties of your contributors. Plates or baskets of sandwiches may include brown bread and butter sandwiches--nice with the baked beans, plain white bread and butter sandwiches, and well-seasoned cheese sandwiches.

For dessert, serve big bowls of assorted fruit. Bright fruits will add to the decoration of your table and they are a most suitable dessert to follow a hearty meal. Peaches, pears, plums, grapes, apples, bananas--all or any of these. Several of the members will bring their best cakes, chocolate or devil's food, caramel, or white cake. For beverages you might serve hot coffee, lemonade and milk for the youngsters.

There, I guess I'd better go over that whole menu once again. You check as I read to be sure you have everything. Crock of hot Boston baked beans and hot scalloped potatoes; Cold sliced meat loaf and cold sliced home-baked ham; Deviled eggs; Mustard; Chile sauce; Mixed pickles and relishes; whole pickles--sweet, sour and dill; Cabbage and pineapple salad; Mixed vegetable salad; Bread and butter sandwiches; Brown bread and butter sandwiches and well-seasoned cheese sandwiches; Assorted fruits; Cake; Cookies; Hot coffee; Lemonade; and Milk.

Thursday: "Marketing Hints."

